AMERICAN NEWSPAPER MEN REAL PIONEERS IN REPORTING WAR NEWS

George W. Kendall, a New Hampshire Yankee, and the Other Men Who Rode With Taylor and Scott Blazed the Way in a New Field of Journalism in the Mexican War Seventy Years Ago

THE first war to be completely reported in the daily press was the conflict of 1846 and 1847 which was fought in the valley of the Rio Grande and among the mountains of the central part of Mexico. The first war correspondents of the modern type were George Wilkins Kendall and the other American newspaper men who rode with Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott seventy years ago. These facts have not heretofore been recognized by students of the history of journalism.

Usually Sir William Howard Russell is called the inventor of war correspondence, and the first professional reporter of wars he certainly was. But what is said in the biography of the famous editor of the London *Times*, John Thaddeus Delane, that when Russell was sent to the Crimea the "idea of having a special correspondent with the army, moving with the troops and describing in detail every action and incident of the camp was an entirely new feature in journalism" is not quite accurate, for precisely that thing was done eight years previously in the war between the United States and Mexico. In America the fact has been almost forgotten, and in England it has never perhaps been known.

The few writers who have had occasion to refer cursorily to the development of the art of war correspondence have mentioned the work done by Crabbe Robinson in 1807 and 1808, and referred to the mission of Charles Lewis Gruneisen to Spain in 1837, and then they have leaped to Russell and the Crimean letters of 1854 and the following years. Crabbe Robinson made it no part of his business to see a battle. Nine years before the war between Mexico and the United States began the *Morning Post* sent Gruneisen to watch the Carlist campaign; he was attached to the headquarters of Don Carlos and he saw fighting, but the days of strenuous exertion to get the news home had not yet arrived, and there was no competitive struggle to be first in London with despatches from the field.

Gruneisen was the first definitely commissioned war reporter, but it was not until the United States went to war with Mexico in 1846 that newspaper men began to show, in a land destitute of the railway and the telegraph, the same qualities of resourcefulness and enterprise in obtaining the news and getting it over land and sea to their papers that Archibald Forbes displayed in France in 1870. Kendall and his fellow workers organized a courier service very similar to that used by MacGahan, Millet and Forbes in the Russo-Turkish war thirty years later, and by the occasional employment of special steamships fitted up as composing rooms with type cases and compositors these reporters of seventy years ago scored their scoops and outsped the Government despatch bearers.

The style of some of the despatches sent out from the camps of Scott and Taylor glitters with gewgaws, and in some there is palpable intention to flatter certain commanders. Few of these reporters were competent military critics. Their letters are in the main a chronicle of "thrilling achievements" by "our gallant troops." But the scream of the eagle was heard from every stump in every political campaign in those days and these despatches, written from the front for the first time in newspaper history and hurried with unexampled speed across 2,000 miles of sea and land, partake of the characteristics of the time.

Many of the messages, and especially those of Kendall, are excellent examples of reporting. A good many military reputations were made by these correspondents. The reporter who told how Jefferson Davis placed his regiment in the form of a V at Buena Vista to repulse a Mexican charge helped that soldier to become the President of the Confederacy. For years the saying "A little more grape, Capt. Bragg," was as famous among Americans as "You may fire when ready, Gridley," is to-day or as ever "Up, guards, and at them!" was in England but Taylor's saying to Braxton Bragg came to the public in the report of a correspondent and not in the official despatches of an officer.

When that new enterprise challenged American journalism a new implement for the collection and distribution of news was just coming into use. Over a wire forty miles long, a year and a half before the first shots were fired, the telegraph had demonstrated its utility as a bearer of news. As the fighting began on the Rio Grande only about 1,200 miles of telegraph were in operation and the wires stretched almost entirely north from the city of Washington into the populous Middle and Eastern States.

The city of New Orleans, near the mouth of the Mississippi, 1,000 miles from Washington, was the centre for the news of the war. To the Southern metropolis the tidings were brought by steamboat and sailing vessel from Point Isabel, from Tampico and from Vera Cruz. And to the ships the news was brought by the daring couriers, the express riders who had to run the gantlet of the guerrillas who infested the dry plains of northern Mexico and the difficult mountain region between the capital and the city of Vera Cruz, whence Scott started on his march inland.

There was fierce rivalry among the New Orleans papers to be first on the street with the news which the couriers and the ships brought to the city. From New Orleans the news was sent up the Mississippi River by steamboat, but the most strenuous exertions were made to send it on to Washington in the shortest possible time.

By steamboat and pony express the copies of the papers and the packets of letters were hurried across the Southern States. Once in Washington the new Morse system was at the service of the Government and the press and there were between 2,000 and 3,000 miles of railroad in operation. But over vast areas of the North neither wire nor rail was available for the transmission of news.

New Orleans was the focal point to which all the lines converged in the Mexican war time and from which they diverged again to all parts of the United States. In that romantic and cosmopolitan city George Wilkins Kendall, a New Hampshire Yankee, and Francis A. Lumsden established the *Picayune*, the first cheap paper which the city possessed, in 1837. Kendall became one of the most brilliant and enterprising journalists of his generation and a father of the art of war correspondence.

Born in 1809, developing a fondness for jocosities while in newspaper work in New York city, and landing in New Orleans at the age of twenty-five, he issued with Lumsden the first number of the *Picayune* as a four page folio, about ten inches by fifteen, described as an "audacious little sheet, scarcely large enough to wrap round a loaf of bread, and as full of witticisms as one of Thackeray's dreams after a light supper." It made a stir in a city whose officials were accustomed to deferential homage by printing lively sonnets about them. It dared to make jokes about sugar and cotton and it "sneezed at tobacco." The startling innovation caught the fancy of the people.

After a few years Kendall embarked upon an adventure which took him to Mexico for the first time. This was the Santa Fe expedition, the history of which is contained in the graphic narrative written by the editor of the *Picayune*. The members of the "invading party" were seized near Santa Fe and marched to the city of Mexico. Several were shot and all were imprisoned.

Gen. Waddy Thompson was sent to Mexico to investigate the rumors which came to the United States of the fate of the members of what was after all a filibustering expedition, and he found Kendall among the lepers in a hospital. His release secured after some time, the writer returned to New Orleans to find himself a popular hero in the city where long before he had been accepted as a wit.

The necessity of the war with Mexico was steadily maintained in the columns of his paper, and no sooner did the conflict actually begin than Kendall was away for the Rio Grande. Through the summer of 1846 he was much of the time with the Rangers of Capt. Benjamin McCulloch, a commander whose men called him "Ben," who could "ride anything that went on four legs," who fought, camped and drank at his own discretion, and who had not the slightest notion of discipline or drill, but nevertheless was invaluable to the main body of the army because of his abilities as a scout. With the Mexican mounted bodies known as the Lancers he had innumerable brushes, and in many of these Kendall had a share.

"Not a sign of a tent do we take along," said Kendall, "and shade and shelter are unknown here."

Almost as a free lance he rode with the Rangers. In the storming of the second height at Monterey a member of his mess was shot. One morning just at dawn after a night under the Spanish bayonet trees ten miles from Monterey with a little party of twenty-five horsemen Kendall set forth upon a reconnoitring expedition. During the morning they fell in with a large body of Mexican cavalry whom they rushed in approved prairie fashion and compelled to fall back.

Some weeks later when Saltillo was entered by Taylor there were other skirmishes between McCulloch's men and the Mexican mounted troops. In one of these small fights Kendall, who much of the time was doing the work of a soldier and could hardly claim the immunity of a non-combatant usually granted a war correspondent, plunged into the melee and came out with a cavalry flag as a trophy, a flag which upon occasion has been exhibited in New Orleans.

Before the battle of Buena Vista was fought Taylor's veterans were ordered to Tampico to become a part of the army to be mobilized for service under Gen. Scott, leaving the commander in the north with a comparatively small force. As the central part of Mexico was now to become the scene of the most important operations Kendall made his way to Tampico, and his partner, Lumsden, also established himself there.

Thus Kendall missed the battle which gave Taylor his greatest fame and which made him President. But the *Picayune* scored a great beat on the news nevertheless. The battle was fought on February 23, 1847, but the result was not known for a month, although the country was filled with disheartening rumors.

At last the *Picayune* got the facts from a messenger who left Monterey on March 9, sailed from the Brazos aboard a schooner on March 14, and fifty miles below the city took passage in a towboat, which landed him in New Orleans at 3 on the morning of March 24. The copies of the *Picayune* containing the joyful tidings reached Baltimore and Washington at the very time when a fierce political debate was going on as to the responsibility for "the weakening of the army of Taylor to such an extent that Santa Anna had been able to wreck it." The official despatches arrived a day later.

Meantime Scott had been organizing the army with which he was to march to the capital of Mexico. The investment of Vera Cruz was begun by Gen. Worth, with whom throughout the campaign Kendall was closely associated. In fourteen days the Americans were in the city. Kendall's pen was very busy. Thirteen inch shells from the castle of San Juan de Ulloa were bursting near him as he wrote his letters. He sent with his messages topographical sketches of the defences and the lines of investment, and forwarded them by schooner and cutter, sending duplicates by any vessels that might be leaving port.

Then the army swept up through the pass of Cerro Gordo and stormed the heights. Kendall was on the scene throughout the fighting at Cerro Gordo, and kept an almost hour to hour record of the conflict. He wrote on the evening of April 16, on the morning of the following day at 8 and 11, twice in the afternoon and several times on the next day.

The mountains became higher, wilder and more difficult of ascent and the Mexican guns were firing down on the invaders. Scott's troops plodded on and up, but their lines were thinned day after day by incurable fever and the steadily downpouring cannonade and musketry of the ambushed foe. Every day there was a skirmish and frequently there was a battle. The men climbed upon the church at Cholula and looked at the snow summits beyond which lay the "Halls of the Montezumas."

The city, "the Venice of the Aztecs," was sighted for the first time from the crest of the mountains on August 10. One after another the forts were stormed and finally Chapultepec. Through these actions Kendall was with Worth, much of the time as a volunteer aid on his staff. Hurried letters, written a few hours apart, were sent off with synopses of the battles which crowded one upon another. Five successive engagements, entirely distinct from one another, were fought in one day, and of these events Kendall wrote with enthusiasm.

The correspondent was climbing church towers to get views of battles. He went over battlegrounds immediately after the cessation of fighting. He carried despatches for Worth. His letters are full of familiar names, Franklin Pierce, Robert Anderson, Phil Kearny and his great charge, Persifor Smith, Cadwalader, Robert E. Lee, Santa Anna sought an armistice, but during the period of quiet the Mexican commander sought to strengthen his defences.

The sham was penetrated by Kendall, whose experience while a prisoner in the city of Mexico a few years before enabled him to detect the design. It was on the evening after Churubusco that he was sitting in the tent of Raphael Semmes, later to be famous as the commander of the Alabama, when the emissaries of Santa Anna arrived to propose a truce to Gen. Scott. They were entertained for a few minutes by Worth and then sent on to headquarters.

The instant they were gone Kendall, says Semmes, "with the bluntness and frankness which characterize him, exclaimed: 'It's no use; we're humbugged—McIntosh is among them!'"

George Wilkins Kendall, war correspondent in Mexico 1846-47.

While a captive Kendall had come to know McIntosh, a British subject, acting as Consul for the English Government, and described as a "creature of Santa Anna." As a neutral he aided in arranging the terms of the armistice. But Kendall declared that the only object was to gain time, and the sequel proved him to be correct.

The fighting resume' Scott was able after two severe actions to enter the city. At the cluster of stone buildings once used as a foundry Worth fought the battle of Molino del Rey, and in his despatches he mentions Kendall:

"I have to acknowledge my obligations to the gentlemen of my staff, who performed their duties with accustomed intelligence and bravery, G. W. Kendall, Esq., of Louisiana, Capt. Wyse and Mr. Hargous, army agent, who came upon the field, volunteered their acceptable services, and conducted themselves in the transmission of orders with conspicuous gallantry."

Five days later the steep and rocky hill with the heavy stone walled fortress of Chapultepec was stormed, an action in which Worth had a part, with Kendall again on his staff. The following day Scott made his formal entry into the capital. Just before fighting ceased Kendall for the first time was wounded. He was struck in the knee by a bullet and again Worth mentioned him in his formal report, saying:

"Major Borland and G. W. Kendall, volunteer aides-de-camp, the latter wounded, each exhibited habitual gallantry, intelligence and devotion."

What has been said indicates the difficulties which newspaper men had to overcome to reach their journals with their packets of news. From three to five days was the ordinary time between Point Isabel or Brazos de Santiago and New Orleans with the news from the army of Gen. Taylor; from five to seven days was the time of the passage between Vera Cruz and New Orleans with the tidings from Scott.

In order to gain a few hours on their competitors Lumsden and Kendall made plans for the meeting of vessels some hours out from New Orleans with a small and fast steamer. This vessel they equipped as a press boat, putting type setters aboard her and all the apparatus for setting up despatches.

The boat met the incoming ships sometimes at the mouth of the Mississippi and at other times lay off the Gulf coast in the track of approaching vessels from Mexico. Once in the hands of the compositors the messages were ready on the way up the river and upon arrival they were hurried to the press and extras run off. It is said that upon one occasion a steamer was chartered for the voyage across the Gulf from Vera Cruz at a cost of $5,000, an enormous sum for those days, and important despatches were put into type during the passage to New Orleans.

Fully as enterprising was Kendall in the organization of a means of getting news across the land. In a country infested by irregular troops the only means of communication was the heavily armed dragoons able to stand off the enemy in a fight and the speedy and cunning express rider who relied upon his wit and his good horse to elude and distance pursuers. The former might be at the service of the army; the latter must be the reliance of the newspapers.

These express riders were employed by Kendall and his partner. To secure their services they had to expend large sums. They provided them with the best mounts obtainable. As Taylor advanced into the interior of northern Mexico and distances became longer extra horses were stationed at convenient points on the relay system. Point Isabel was the objective and as close connection as possible was made with the ships for New Orleans.

Between Vera Cruz and the capital the difficulties of the express service were still greater. The country was infested with bandits who robbed and murdered even wounded Mexicans. The nature of the country favored the guerrilla system. The road for miles from the coast was through sand hills and chaparral through which progress in the intense heat was slow. Thence the way led through a tropical jungle where marauders might pounce upon stragglers with ease.

At two points in the mountains the bandits gathered in numbers under notorious leaders. Mail bags were occasionally recovered where they had been left after robbers had examined their contents. Scott's express riders were cut off again and again. More than once there was intense anxiety at Washington over the army swallowed up in the mountains of Mexico. In his diary Anderson mentions efforts to establish some regular expresses.

Just that quick and sure communication with Vera Cruz was what Kendall sought to secure for his news despatches. Very probably the system arranged was the most regular and certain of any maintained in the campaign. Anderson several times entrusted his letters to what he calls "Mr. Kendall's express."

The riders started usually at midnight and, chosen for their familiarity with the country and for their courage, they proceeded cautiously and rapidly night and day, picking up such fresh horses as the correspondent had been able to arrange for. Some of these riders must have been daring fellows, for several lost their lives while trying to get through the ambushes of the guerrillas. Three in succession were captured in September, 1847, and one of these was killed fighting desperately.

Scott's couriers were stopped and slain at times; one large train of wagons was attacked; stage coaches although heavily guarded, were robbed often; thus the odds were decidedly against the expresses of the *Picayune* yet until the very end of the campaign these couriers continued to run the gantlet with a surprising degree of success. In two or three instances Kendall employed the old cavalry officer who rode as a legation courier for the British diplomatic representative, an Rafael, the courier of the British merchants.

Thus it came about that the people of the whole country teemed with citations from Kendall's letters during 184 and 1847. The final beat for the paper was scored in connection with the signing of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February, 1848, and this time again the War Department was outpaced.

A chartered steamer brought a copy of the treaty from Vera Cruz. Chosen for speed, and prepared carefully in advance for a fast trip, she left the Government's messenger far astern. The extras gave the news to the people of New Orleans and then the pony express carried copies north and east to Baltimore. And the Baltimore *Sun* printed the treaty, sent copies to the capital and circulated them on the streets of Washington before the officials of the Government had received the news.

Other newspaper men served with great credit in that war. James L. Freaner of the New Orleans *Delta* used the signature "Mustang." At the battle of Monterey he killed an officer of lancers in single combat and seized his charger, whence his newspaper name. He was with the rangers of Capt. Jack Hays, and later was involved in the controversy which grew out of the publication in the *Delta* of what was called the "Leonidas letter" in which the praises of Gen. Pillow were trumpeted with more noise than wisdom.

Soon after the close of the war Kendall left for Europe, remaining there years and spending much time in Paris arranging for the illustration of his work upon the battles which he had witnessed. The volume appeared in quarto form and was a sumptuous production for those days. A few of the colored lithographs have many times been reproduced.

In Paris the editor met and married Mlle. Adeline de Valcourt, who as a child was with Napoleon in the retreat from Moscow, whose eldest brother served in the Crimea and whose younger brother served in the war of 1870. Their sons have risen to command in the United States army. Returning to America this pioneer war correspondent removed to Texas and established himself upon a large ranch in the county which now bears his name. He died in 1867.

UNIQUE MODEL OF YOSEMITE PARK MADE OF A MILLION AND A HALF DOLLARS

DURING the last few months three Departments of the Government at Washington have combined in the project of making a mountain of money. Eleven experts are now completing the green clad slopes of the affair, which is estimated to contain $1,500,000.

This mountain of money owes its creation to the idea that the beauties of Yosemite Park, in Mariposa county, California, are not as widely appreciated as they should be. Visitors who gaze upon the wonders of the valley never forget it. They tell their friends of the Bridal Veil Falls and the limpid, clear waters of Lost Lake and the other marvels they have seen, but still, as the Government considers it, not enough people journey to Yosemite to view the natural wonders there. It has often been declared that there is nothing in Europe to compare with the park, and so the Government has taken up a novel publicity scheme to awaken wider interest in it.

Officials of three Departments put their heads together and worked out the idea. The Departments were the Interior, the Agricultural and the Treasury, and the officials sought some plan to show tourists just what they were missing when they made a trip to the far West and failed to include Yosemite Park in their itinerary. The consultations resulted in the suggestion of a reproduction of the park in miniature, and this was finally determined on. The Government has a corps of expert modellers in its employ, and so there was little difficulty in making the miniature reservation. The model will be exhibited at the San Francisco exposition in 1915.

But the officials of the three Departments failed to fall upon the big idea in the publicity scheme. They outlined their plan to one of the Government's foremost model makers and let it go at that.

So H. W. Hendley, painter, sculptor and modeller extraordinary, found the job on his hands. The officials informed him of what they wanted, and told him to have the reservation completed by a certain time. Hendley, who made some of the famous groups of figures in the National Museum in Washington, started on his task with vim. It offered all sorts of possibilities; he would be able to work out some entirely new effects, and in his mind's eye he could almost see the finished product.

He made the model from an original contour map obtained from the Geological Survey. This was blocked off in three inch squares, and these squares were enlarged to eighteen inches, requiring twenty-one squares, and giving a scale to the larger map of 310 feet to the inch. The horizontal and vertical scales were the same. The photographer of the Bureau of Good Roads, which has direct charge of the making of the miniature reservation, performs magic in map enlargements. In this instance within two days he had completed a map that would have taken a draughtsman several months to make. Enlarging six times each of these three inch squares blocked off on the map, the photographer had in a few minutes a collection of twenty-one sections of Yosemite Park, which, when pasted together in correct position, gave a perfect map of the dimensions required for the model, five by twelve feet.

At this point in the work Mr. Hendley struck his first snag—and the snag turned out to be a gold mine in the eyes of the Government officials who desired publicity. In most cases ordinary newspapers boiled down to a pulp or cotton pulp is utilized for the manufacture of figures for exhibition. But Mr. Hendley soon found that this pulp lacked the strength needed for his model and he started experimenting.

After working several days and arriving at no solution to his problem he sent to the Treasury for money, a peck and a half at the very least. It is not a usual occurrence for money to be forthcoming from the Treasury by the peck measure, except in one form, and that is after it has been redeemed, mutilated and macerated.

The call of Mr. Hendley was an urgent one. He seemed to know just what he wanted, and he received his basket of discarded greenbacks without his request passing through a considerable amount of governmental red tape. It was estimated by employees of the Treasury that Mr. Hendley's peck and a half of chopped bank notes was at one time worth a million and a half dollars.

The money was immediately mixed with a kind of cornstarch, glue and plaster. This composition is Hendley's own formula, and it becomes like flint when thoroughly dry. An ordinary nail cannot be hammered into it.

The paste prepared, Hendley rounded off El Capitan and shaped up Cathedral Rocks, Sentinel Dome, Glacier Point and all the other wonder spots popular with tourists. When the miniature park is completed all of the well known places shown to visitors will be in their proper locations, and they will be so clearly indicated that a glance at the model will revive the whole magnificent vista in the mind of any observer who has ever stood on Inspiration Point or scaled El Capitan to get a view of the great valley. Even Mirror Lake is reproduced, and it is devoid of but few of the beauties known to the traveller who sees its wonders at sunrise.

Some of the difficulties involved in its construction may be appreciated when it is remembered that every detail of Yosemite Park is faithfully represented. The meadows, mountains, chasms, lakes, streams, falls, precipices, forests and boulders that cover an area of about the proportions of the State of Rhode Island are shown. Yosemite Park comprises no less than 1,124 square miles.

Aside from the old money that went into the manufacture of the model, the cost of its construction, had it been made by other than Government experts, would have been enormous. A professional topographer whose reputation is established was asked what he would charge to duplicate the contour map. He replied that $25,000 was a low estimate for the work, and that it would take him two years to complete the work. The model up to date has required for its construction the services of an engineer, a topographer, a geologist, a photographer, a draughtsman, a cabinet maker, a model maker, a plumber, a carpenter, a machinist and an electrician.

H. W. Hendley at work on Uncle Sam's million and a half dollar model of Yosemite Park.